

Hoops by Robert Burleigh

Hoops.
The game.
Feel it.

The round roughness.
The ball
like a piece
of the thin long reach
of your body.

The way it answers whenever you call.
The never-stop back and forth flow,
like tides going in, going out.

The smooth
skaterly glide
and sudden swerve.

The sideways slip
through a moment of narrow space.

The cool.

The into
and under
and up.

The featherly fingertip roll
and soft slow drop.

Feel your throat on fire.
Feel the asphalt burning beneath your shoes.
The two-of-you rhythm.
The know-where-everyone-is without having
to look.

The watching
and waiting
to poke
and pounce.

The fox on the lurk.

The hunger.

The leap from the pack.

The out-in-the-clear
like a stallion
with the wind in your face.

The bent legs tense
as the missed shot swirls
and silently spins.

The hawk.

Your arms shooting up
through a thicket of arms.

The lean
and brush
and burst free.

The skittery
cat-footed dance
along the baseline.

The taste
for the rock in your hands
when it counts the most.

The weight of you
hanging from fine,
invisible threads.

The eyes.

The arc.
the no-sound
sound of the ball

as it sinks
through nothing but still,
pure air.
Yes.

Hoops.
The game.
Feel it.